

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 L-03 H-02 PRS-01 OMB-01 /050 W

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P 270921Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO DOD WASHDC PRIORITY

SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2414

AMEMBASSY MANILA PRIORITY

CINCPAC PRIORITY

JCS WASHDC PRIORITY

S E C R E T SEOUL 6651

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: RP MILI

SUBJECT: PHIL BASES: MELCHOIR'S CALL ON SECDEF

REF: MANILA 11733

1. AT HIS REQUEST ALEX MELCHOIR ACCOMPANIED BY PHILLIPPINE AMBASSADOR TO ROK, CALLED ON SECRETARY SCHLESINGER FOR THIRTY MINUTES AUGUST 26.

2. MELCHOIR SAID HE HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED BY PRESIDENT MARCOS TO SEE SECDEF IN SEOUL AND MAKE THREE POINTS.

(A) THE PRESIDENT WANTED TO ASSURE THE SECRETARY THAT THE U.S. WOULD HAVE CONTINUED USE OF CLARK AND SUBIC. WE SHOULD NOT BE BOTHERED BY WHAT APPEARS IN PHILIPPINE NEWSPAPERS.

(B) PRESIDENT MARCOS WANTED TO INVOKE ARTICLE III OF THE MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY AS IT APPLIES TO THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES. HIS COUNTRY HAD HELD OFF FROM INVOKING IT FOR A LONG TIME BUT THE EVIDENCE OF EXTERNAL AGRESSION ON THE PART OF TUN MUSTAPHA AND THE LIBYANS IS NOW PUBLIC. THE PHILIPPINES WANTED U.S. MILITARY ASSIST-

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ANCE TO DEAL WITH THIS SITUATION. HE GAVE THE SECRETARY

WHAT HE DESCRIBED AS "A SORT" OF AIDE MEMOIRE (REPEATED BY SEPARATE MESSAGE.)

(C) HE WAS INSTRUCTED TO GIVE THE SECRETARY A PHILIPPINE PLAN FOR RESTRUCTURING THE BASE ARRANGEMENTS IN THE PHILIPPINES. WHILE THE U.S. WOULD STILL BE ABLE TO USE THE BASES FOR ITS MILITARY PURPOSES, THE PLAN CALLS FOR "CHANGING THE LABELS" OF THE BASES, MAKING THEM CIVILIAN AND DEVELOPING THEIR COMMERCIAL USES. THE FILIPINOS HAD PROVIDED A COPY OF THE PLAN TO SENATOR MANSFIELD.

3. SECDEF TOLD MELCHOIR THAT HE WELCOMED THE ASSURANCES ON USE OF THE BASES. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD PHIL REASONS FOR BRINGING ABOUT "VISUAL" ALTERATIONS IN BASE ARRANGEMENTS. HOWEVER, THE PHILS SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT CLARK AND SUBIC WERE ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE U.S. MILITARY POWER IN THE PACIFIC AND THUS THE BALANCE OF POWER IN THE AREA. THIS WAS ALSO ESSENTIAL TO THE SECURITY OF THE PHILIPPINES. WE COULD ADJUST TO CHANGES IN APPEARANCES AS LONG AS THEY DID NOT PREVENT EFFECTIVE USE OF THE BASES. THE PHILS SHOULD ALSO BE MINDFUL THAT WE TOO HAVE OUR SERIOUS POLITICAL PROBLEMS, THAT CONGRESS IS ALSO CONCERNED WITH APPEARANCES AND INCREASINGLY DISINCLINED TO SUPPORT ALLIED COUNTRIES WHO DO NOT WANT US OR CLEARLY MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR US TO OPERATE EFFECTIVELY. THE PHILS SHOULD NOT CONTRIBUTE TO OUR POLITICAL PROBLEMS IN MAINTAINING U.S. POWER IN THE PACIFIC,

--MELCHOIR SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE POINT. THE PHILS WERE NOT YELLING "YANKEE GO HOME: BUT THEY DID HAVE TO LIVE WITH THEIR NEIGHBORS AND TO BE CONCERNED WITH APPEARANCES. IT WAS ALSO TRUE THAT THE BASES DID NOT ASSIST WITH PHIL SECURITY PROBLEMS IN MINDINAO.

--SECDEF REPEATED THAT HE WANTED THE PHILS TO BE FULLY COGNIZANT OF THE ISSUES INVOLVED IN THE U.S. AND THAT PERCEPTIONS IN THE U.S. WERE ALSO VERY IMPORTANT. IN CONSIDERING THE CHANGES UNDERWAY IN THE PACIFIC IT SHOULD ALSO BE CLEAR THAT THE REALITIES OF POWER HAVE NOT ALTERED THAT MUCH AND THAT VIETNAM HAS NOT AFFECTED THE FUNDAMENTAL
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MILITARY BALANCE IN ASIA.

--MELCHOIR COMMENTED THAT MARCOS WANTED TO HELP US MAINTAIN THAT BALANCE AND HE AGREED THAT EVENTS IN INDO-CHINA HAD NOT ALTERED THE FUNDAMENTAL MILITARY BALANCE.

--ON ARTICLE III THE SECRETARY SAID WE WOULD CONSIDER THEIR

POSITION AND GIVE THE PHILS AN ANSWER IN DUE COURSE. IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT IN THE U.S. THE MINDINAO PROBLEM WAS CONSIDERED A DOMESTIC ONE INVOLVING LONG STANDING PHIL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. MELCHOIR SAID THAT WAS ALSO THE PHIL VIEW, BUT THE PROBLEM HAD NOW SERIOUS EXTERNAL ASPECTS BECAUSE OF THE HELP TO THE MOSLEM INSURGENTS BY TUN MUSTAPHA AND THE LIBYANS. HE SAID IT WAS URGENT FOR THE PHILS TO SECURE MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO DEAL WITH THE INSURGENCY. THE INSURGENCY WAS DRAINING THE PHILS ECONOMICALLY.

--ON THE "RESTRUCTURING OF BASES" THE SECRETARY MERELY SAID WE WOULD TAKE A LOOK AT THE PHIL PLAN. CITING CAMP JOHN HAY, MELCHOIR SAID THAT HE ENVISIONED THE WHOLE RE-STRUCTURING OPERATION TO BE MANAGED BY A U.S. FIRM AND THAT THE U.S. BASES WOULD PUBLICLY BECOME COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS. THE U.S. WOULD STILL BE ABLE TO USE THESE BASES. HE SAID THE PLAN HAD BEEN GIVEN TO SENATOR MANSFIELD ONLY AND THAT THEY DID NOT INTEND A CONGRESSIONAL PR CAMPAIGN. MANSFIELD WAS A FRIEND AND THEY WERE CURIOUS AS TO HIS REACTION, WHICH WAS THAT HE WOULD URGE "FLEXIBILITY."

--MELCHOIR CONCLUDED BY AGAIN STATING THERE WAS SOME URGENCY WITH REGARD TO GETTING EQUIPMENT TO DEAL WITH THE INSURGENCY. HE CITED A RISE IN INFILTRATION ACTIVITIES AS A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR.

--THE SECRETARY CLOSED BY ASKING MELCHOIR TO PASS ON HIS PERSONAL GREETINGS TO THE PRESIDENT AND TO URGE CARE ON THE PART OF THE PHILIPPINES IN DEALING WITH BASE ISSUES.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, MILITARY BASE AGREEMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 AUG 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975SEOUL06651
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750296-0672
From: SEOUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750813/aaaaakzg.tel
Line Count: 145
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 MANILA 11733
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 JUL 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <17 JUL 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PHIL BASES: MELCHOIR'S CALL ON SECDEF
TAGS: MILI, RP, (MELCHOIR, ALEX), (SCHLESINGER, JAMES)
To: DOD
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006